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Outsourcing the Gender Factory: Living Arrangements and Service Expenditures on Female and Male Tasks

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Abstract

Using data from the U.S. Consumer Expenditure Survey 1998, this study analyzes how much money different types of households spend for domestic services on “female” and “male” tasks. We test alternative hypotheses based on economic and sociological theories of gender differentiation. Contrary to arguments that marriage lowers the risk to one partner of specializing in housework, we find no differences in service expenditures between cohabiting and married couples. Consistent with gender production arguments that the household context shapes behavior, single women outspend couples across the board. Single men, however, reveal spending behavior more consistent with gender socialization. Comparing single men and single women points to the gendered nature of the tasks as an important aspect of domestic service expenditures.

Domestic services are purchased to alleviate time demands in the home. Outsourcing is substituting market goods and services for one's own labor (Bittman, Matheson and Meagher 1999). Just as firms outsource accounting or janitorial functions to independent contractors, so do households buy substitutes for their members' labor. Outsourced alternatives are produced in the industrial sector (e.g., take-out dinners) and the service sector (e.g., nannies, carpet cleaners, personal tax accountants). In the United States where housekeeping and childcare services are often provided by undocumented Latina immigrants (Hondagneu-Sotelo 2001), these jobs are typically unregulated by formal rules and contracts and characterized by low pay rates. Given the increase in dual-earner families (McLanahan and Casper 1995), domestic outsourcing is an adaptive strategy for families that have high disposable incomes to purchase services, but less discretionary time for housework (Treas 1987). As an alternative to housewifery, domestic services may explain why women devote less time to housework than in the 1960s (Bianchi et al. 2000). Research shows that married couples use services in response to competing time demands of home and work (Bellante and Foster 1984; Brayfield 1995; Cohen 1998; Hanson and Ooms 1991; Oropesa 1993; Soberon-Ferrer and Dardis 1991). Reporting on cleaning, cooking and childcare that fall mostly to women, studies have neglected expenditures on “male” chores around the house.

Women do most of the housework (Blair and Lichter 1991), but outsourcing studies display little gender theorizing (but see Oropesa, 1993, and Van Dijk and Siegers, 1996). By offsetting structural barriers to gender equality, purchased services help married women to compete in the labor market. Outsourcing household work diminishes the demands of

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women's "second shift" at home (Hochschild 1989). Cohabiting women may also benefit from outsourcing, but the expenditures of cohabitators and married couples may differ. Compared to married people, cohabitators do less housework, and both partners do more paid work – consistent with their egalitarian views of gender (Coltrane 2000). As another incentive to outsource, singles face gender-specific labor shortages in the home because they lack a partner to handle chores generally assigned to the other gender.

This study investigates how spending on "gender-typed" domestic tasks in the United States varies by living arrangements (i.e., household differences in gender composition). This is, to our knowledge, the first study to use expenditure data to study the gendering of domestic outsourcing. Because there is little theorizing on how outsourcing varies by household type, we extrapolate from the literature on the household division of labor to develop hypotheses about domestic service spending. Admittedly, expenditures are a rough measure of outsourcing because they do not distinguish between the quantity and quality of the domestic good or service purchased. A data set containing information about 1,114 Dutch households reveals that the correlation between the amount of outsourcing and expenditures is high (.6, $p < .001$) for home maintenance and housekeeping (Van der Lippe and Glebbeek 2004). We assume outsourcing replaces, rather than augments, the domestic labor of household members. Lacking data on both expenditures and time use, we cannot evaluate this assumption directly.

Theorizing on the nature of partnerships, gender and the division of household labor informs our study. First, comparing expenditures for married and cohabiting couples tests competing hypotheses inspired by economic and sociological theories of gender differentiation. Second, comparing expenditures for couples with singles, and for single men with single women, tests hypotheses from two sociological perspectives: 1) In *gender socialization*, stable internalized identities supported by macro level structures of inequality lead to consistency in gendered behavior and, 2) In *gender production*, gendered behavior is fluid and situational, depending on the composition of the household.

Background

Three explanations for outsourcing have been offered. The *household resources* argument says finances influence spending. The higher the household income, the more domestic services are used (Bellante and Foster 1984; Bittman, Matheson and Meagher 1999; Cho 1993; Cohen 1998; Oropesa 1993; Spitze 1999). The *time availability* explanation (Hiller 1984) argues that paid employment reduces the time available for housework. Compared to single earner couples, dual earner couples dine out more often (Bellante and Foster 1984; Bittman, Matheson and Meagher 1999; Cho 1993; Kim 1989; Soberon-Ferrer and Dardis 1991; Yen 1993). Some studies find that available time decreases the use of housekeeping services (Bittman, Matheson and Meagher 1999; Cho 1993; Cohen 1998), but others do not (Bellante and Foster 1984; Kim 1989; Oropesa 1993; Soberon-Ferrer and Dardis 1991). The *demand capability* argument (Coverman 1985) argues the volume of housework raises the demand for timesaving domestic services. The number of rooms to clean increases the demand (Van der Lippe, Tijdens and De Ruijter 2004). Some studies find that young children affect the use of services such as housecleaning (Bittman, Matheson and Meagher 1999), but others disagree (Cho 1993; Cohen 1998; Soberon-Ferrer and Dardis 1991; Zick and McCullough 1996).

In addition, women with higher education make more use of housekeeping services, if not prepared food (Bellante and Foster 1984; Cohen 1998; Soberon-Ferrer and Dardis 1991; Van der Lippe, Tijdens and De Ruijter 2004; Yen 1993). Nonwhites spend more on housekeeping and eating out (Cohen 1998; Yen 1993). Some studies report that age is associated with

greater expenditures on housekeeping but lower spending on dining out (Cohen 1998; Bittman, Matheson and Meagher 1999), while others find no age differences (Zick and McCullough 1996).

Studies on married couples' time-saving expenditures do not address gender differentiation in household responsibilities. Economic specialization theory, which assumes the efficiency of an implicitly gendered, division of labor, has implications for outsourcing by couples. At one extreme, neither partner does domestic work and outside help is necessary to provide essentials (e.g., clean clothing, adequate nutrition and reasonably hygienic surroundings). At the other extreme, one partner specializes in household chores, and there may be little, if any, need for outside help.

Specialization

According to the New Home Economics (Becker 1981), household well-being is maximized when the partner with a comparative earnings advantage invests in the labor market while the other partner concentrates on the home. Gender discrimination typically gives men the labor force advantage. Functionalists made a similar argument: childbearing ties women to the home where they take on "expressive" roles; men provide "instrumental" leadership based on their ties to the occupational realm (Parsons and Bales 1955). Having one partner devoted exclusively to the home reduces the need for outsourcing, but few couples strictly allocate one partner's time to the market and the other's to the household. Extreme specialization is vulnerable to the loss of a partner and cannot accommodate the shifting demands of the family life course (Oppenheimer 1997).

Risks to Specialization

Specialization is risky for the partner who concentrates on the home. Time spent in housework depresses wages (Hersch and Stratton 2002), leading to an unequal balance of marital power (Bernasco and Giesen 2000). Unlike investment in a career, investment in domestic skills is tied to a specific relationship and has little value if that union ends (Williamson [1981] 1985). Unless protected from this risk, *neither* partner has an incentive to be the "housewife." Outsourcing makes specializing in housework unnecessary, lets both partners focus on careers and equalizes marital power.

Specializing in housework is riskier for cohabitators who lack the legal protections of marriage (Bernasco and Giesen 2000). If a union ends, marriage in the United States is safer than cohabitation in many respects (e.g., pension rights, division of marital property) (Smock and Gupta 2002). By contrast, no U.S. state has codified property rights and distribution rules for a cohabiting union that ends (Durst 1997; Rindfuss and Vandenhuevel 1990). With few obstacles to dissolution, cohabitators are more likely than married persons to end their union (Smock 2000). In fact, in choosing to cohabit rather than marry, they signal uncertainty and a limited commitment that may encourage self-interested bargaining, instead of cooperation (Brines and Joyner 1999; Rindfuss and Vandenhuevel 1990).

With more protections than cohabitators, married couples will be more likely to specialize—devoting the time of one partner to the home and one to the labor market. Although women do more housework than men in both partnerships, married women do more housework than cohabiting women (Denmark, Shaw and Ciali 1985; Nock 1998; Shelton and John 1993; South and Spitze 1994). Studies report that married men spend less time on housework than cohabiting men (Denmark, Shaw and Ciali 1985; Kotkin 1983), but recent reports show no

marital status differences (Gupta 1999; Shelton and John 1993; South and Spitze 1994) or find cohabiting men less involved (Waite and Gallagher 2000).

Gender Influences

A man who earns less than his wife will not necessarily do more housework so she can focus on her job (Brines 1994). This contradicts not only the comparative advantage logic of economic specialization, but also the exchange theory argument that resources (e.g., income) give wives power. Even in dual earner families, wives have more family responsibilities (Presser 1994), but men increase their share of housework when the wife contributes a larger portion of household income (Bianchi et al. 2000). Although higher income permits more outsourcing, men's and women's earnings affect these expenditures differently (Oropesa 1993). In purchasing housekeeping services, a wife's earnings have more weight than her husband's (Cohen 1998). A wife's earnings have the larger effect on her time spent in housework (Bianchi et al. 2000; Van der Lippe and Siegers 1994). Husband's and wife's incomes have comparable effects on dining out, which offers a recreational experience and an alternative to cooking (Cohen 1998).

Gender-typing of chores may affect the *types* of tasks surrendered to outsiders (Blair and Lichter 1991; Presser 1994; Twiggs, McQuillan and Ferree 1999). Routine chores that are unrelenting, time-consuming or unpleasant (e.g., laundry, cleaning) typically fall to women, whereas occasional tasks (e.g., maintenance, yard care), which are flexible, creative and even recreational, fall to men (Hochschild 1989). Bianchi et al. (2000) distinguish "core" housework (cooking, meal clean-up, housecleaning, laundry) from less time intensive, discretionary tasks (outdoor chores, repairs, garden care, animal care, bill paying). From 1965 through 1995, women dominated the core tasks while men increased their time doing male-oriented, "other" chores. Given gender-typing of chores, specialization arguments benefit from theorizing that incorporates gendered identities and global measures of household spending need to be disaggregated into task-specific measures.

Because specializing in housework carries the risk of lower market earnings, we expect outsourcing expenditures to differ for couples that marry as opposed to cohabit. To explain differences between heterosexual couples and singles, however, we consider how gender influences domestic behavior. Two theories start with the same assumptions – that social structures give gendered meanings to certain behaviors and that gender is predicated on an ideology of separate spheres (Ferree 1990; Thompson and Walker 1995). Emphasizing power structures and belief systems, a contemporary *gender socialization* perspective implies that men and women conform to internalized ideologies of gender differentiation and inequality, independent of their household context. Partnered or not, women perform "women's work" and men do "masculine" tasks. The *gender production* approach, however, assumes that people only act out gendered behavior under certain conditions, for example, when they have a partner of the opposite sex. Whether gendered behavior is linked to prior socialization or immediate circumstances, viewed as a habit or as strategic action, has important implications. Gender socialization predicts relatively consistent acting out of gendered behavior. Gender production predicts gendered behavior as situational and dependent on the gender composition of the household.

Gender socialization

Because we are integrated in wider systems of economic and political power (Blumberg 1984; Ferree 1990), macro-level gender structures and ideologies provide roadmaps for behavior.

Gender categorization and gender stratification are key (Reskin 1988). For example, the “male breadwinner model” keeps women at home with its essentialist idea that they are better suited to tend children (Hochschild 1997). Internalizing gender norms and structures fosters behavior consistent with stable gender identities. Micro-level behavior, in turn, reinforces structures of gender inequality. Sustained by broader social structures and intimate power relations, internalized expectations for gendered behavior influence the division of housework between partners as well the type of housework singles perform or outsource to third parties. Egalitarian gender beliefs may result in a more equal division of household work (Bianchi et al. 2000; Blair and Lichter 1991; Brayfield 1992; Coltrane and Ishii-Kuntz 1992; Presser 1994), but husbands’ views may carry more weight than wives’ (Shelton and John 1996).

Gender Production

Gender socialization implies consistent behavior for men and women regardless of living arrangements. Another theory sees gender as emergent, situational, and flexible. Gender is created symbolically as “a routine accomplishment embedded in everyday interaction” (West and Zimmerman 1987: 125). Produced via interactive behaviors (e.g., household labor) linked to gender, gender need not operate at a conscious level (Berk 1985). In others’ presence, the amount and type of housework we do will conform to shared expectations for gendered behavior. Imbued with symbolic meanings, housework is not just work, but also an expression of social bonds, caring, and gender (DeVault 1991). With a male partner, women do routine housework whereas men avoid it, in part, to show their respective femininity or masculinity. In non-couple households, men and women have less need to display gender-linked behaviors.

Consistent with gender production, time spent on housework is higher for married and cohabiting persons than for the never-married (South and Spitze 1994). In couples, women do most of the housework (Blair and Lichter 1991; Nock 1998; Perkins and DeMeis 1996; Shelton and John 1993; South and Spitze 1994). Men slack off on housework after they enter a marriage or cohabitation, whereas women do more (Gupta 1999). Egalitarian task-sharing by same-sex couples shows that household context elicits gendered behavior (Blumstein and Schwartz 1983; Kurdek 1993; Sullivan 1996). If gender-coded behavior depends on the opportunities for interaction in the home, a man in a heterosexual couple will avoid “women’s” chores, but perform masculine tasks for his partner. A woman will perform “women’s work” and avoid stereotypically male chores. According to gender socialization, people embrace own-gender tasks and avoid opposite-gender tasks regardless of household context. Gender production predicts that men and women will *only* display such behavior if they have a partner of the opposite gender. Thus, situational preferences for doing gendered work shape the demand for services.

Hypotheses

Comparing singles to couples and single women to single men, we exploit the gender-typing of household tasks to develop alternative hypotheses about outsourcing expenditures from gender socialization and gender production theories. We extend the study of outsourcing to the growing number of households that are not husband-wife units. Following South and Spitze (1994), cohabitators include currently cohabiting, heterosexual couples, whether a partner has ever been married or not. Singles are not married and live without a partner, regardless of past arrangements. Besides their

composition, the married, cohabiting, and single households differ in other ways that may affect expenditures (McLanahan and Casper 1995; Smock 2000). Having lower incomes than couples, single men may have to do their own housework (Goldscheider and Waite 1991). Similarly, cohabiters' spending may reflect the fact that they are more similar to single persons than to married couples in fertility plans, employment, school enrollment, and homeownership (Rindfuss and VandenHeuvel 1990). As expenditures are shaped by demographic, economic, and cultural factors, as well as by our theoretical concern with gender differentiation, we test hypotheses on spending, controlling for factors confounding the relation of household type and spending.

Married vs. Cohabiting Couples

If marriage protects against the earnings risk of specializing in housework, married couples will be more likely than cohabiters to have the female concentrate on the home. Such married couples have less need for domestic outsourcing, particularly of "core" female tasks. Having incentives for both partners to focus on paid work instead of housekeeping, cohabiters are more likely to buy substitutes for their own domestic labor.

H1a:*Cohabiting couples will spend more on services than married couples. (Specialization Hypothesis)*

Neither gender theory predicts spending differences for married and cohabiting couples. Gender production assumes that people act out gender identities when they have a partner of the opposite sex, regardless of their partnership type. Whether married or cohabiting, people do the tasks that demonstrate their masculinity or femininity to their partner. Gender socialization assumes people act on gender identities. Heterosexual couples, married or not, have someone to do male tasks and someone to do female tasks. Extrapolating from housework to spending leads to a gender alternative to the specialization hypothesis.

H1b:*Cohabiting and married couples will spend the same amount on services. (Gender Production/Socialization Hypothesis)*

Couple vs. Non-couple Households

If femininity or masculinity is produced for and with a partner of the opposite gender, we expect more gendered behavior in heterosexual couples than in other households. People without a heterosexual partner have fewer incentives or opportunities for complementary, gendered behavior. A man without a female partner has nobody to do female chores, to collude in his manly avoidance of "women's work" or to appreciate his performance of masculine tasks. Relatively indifferent to the gender-typing, singles may spend more than couples to avoid the drudgery of both male and female tasks.

H2a:*Regardless of the gender-type of tasks, single persons will spend more on services than heterosexual couples. (Gender Production Hypothesis)*

In contrast, gender socialization links domestic activities to stable commitments to internalized gender identities: Rather than calibrate their efforts to their partners, women will

do “women’s work” and men will do male tasks, regardless of their living arrangements. Because the households of couples and single women contain a woman with learned skills and internalized motivation to do “women’s work,” they will not differ in expenditures for female tasks. The same logic holds for men and male tasks.

H2b: Single people spend the same as heterosexual couples on own-gender domestic tasks. (Gender Socialization Hypothesis – Own Gender Tasks)

People have less interest in, or feelings of responsibility for, the tasks associated with the other gender. Leaving aside discomfort in trespassing gender boundaries, limited knowledge of how to do such tasks argues for hiring help, even as it may make it hard to drive a good bargain. Homeowners say that they hire professionals for household tasks because of their lack of know-how, not their lack of time (Larson 1993). Without a heterosexual partner to do the other gender’s chores, single people will spend more than couples to avoid unfamiliar tasks.

H2c: Single persons will spend more on other-gender household tasks than heterosexual couples. (Gender Socialization Hypothesis – Other Gender Tasks)

Single Men vs. Single Women

Gender production argues that women without a male partner lack a masculine other with whom to produce gendered behavior. They have no incentive to excel at female tasks or to avoid male ones. Similarly, single men have less reason to avoid female housework or to show off skill in masculine tasks than do men in heterosexual couples. Without an audience to affect their choice of tasks, they can avoid both types of work by outsourcing.

H3a: Single men and women will spend the same on outsourcing for all household tasks. (Gender Production Hypothesis)

In contrast, gender socialization implies single men and women differ on expenditures depending on the gender-type of tasks. If internalized ideologies and experience encourage men and women to do different types of tasks, single women will do more “women’s work” than single men. If they do own-gender tasks, there is no need to purchase substitutes for female tasks. Similarly, single men will do more “men’s work,” outsourcing fewer masculine tasks than their female counterparts.

H3b: Singles will spend less money on outsourcing own-gender tasks than their single counterparts of the other gender. (Gender Socialization Hypothesis – Own Gender Tasks)

Gender socialization implies that men and women, acting on gender expectations and learned skills, will devote less effort to tasks associated with the other gender. Without a female partner to do feminine tasks, single men will buy substitutes so they can avoid them. Single women will avoid conflicting behavior by outsourcing male tasks. Single men will spend more on female tasks than will single women, whereas single women will spend more on male tasks than will single men.

H3c: Single persons will spend more money outsourcing other-gender tasks than their single counterparts of the opposite gender. (Gender Socialization Hypothesis – Other Gender Tasks)

Data and Methods

The Consumer Expenditure Survey 1998 (CE98) has a household probability sample representative of the U.S. population (Bureau of Labor Statistics 1998) at a response rate of 79.9 percent. Consumer units are people who live together and share expenses. A household may have multiple consumer units (e.g., roommates not sharing expenses). CE98 covers five quarters with each household interviewed four times, sometimes over different years, on expenditures and household characteristics for the prior three months. This included 14,313 consumer units. However, only 13,712 consumer units were interviewed about their spending during 1998, so we limit our sample to these cases.

Besides household composition, labor force behavior and marital status, the CE asks about consumer unit expenditures (e.g., clothes, accounting fees, domestic services). There are data on money spent on two male tasks (home maintenance, gardening) and three female ones (laundry, housekeeping, dining out). We construct two dependent variables, 1998 annual expenditures on male and on female tasks, from quarterly expenses of the consumer unit. Expenses for the months in 1998 are added, divided by the number of months for which data on the consumer unit are available, and multiplied by twelve. Because the rotating panel design means some consumer units have less than 12 months of expenditure data, some households have zero spending on seasonal tasks (e.g., gardening, home maintenance). Controls for number of interview months and the time of the interview month did not change our central findings.

To equate expenditures across households, we divide yearly expenditures by the household value on an equivalence scale, a measure of the relative costs of living for households of different sizes and compositions (Citro and Michael 1995):

$$\begin{aligned}\text{Scale value} &= (A + PK)^F \\ \text{Scale value} &= (A + .70K)^{.65}\end{aligned}$$

Where A is the number of adults in the households, K is the number of children (each treated as a proportion P of an adult), and F is the scale economy factor.

Living arrangements

For convenience, we refer to consumer units as households. We distinguish between married, heterosexual cohabiting, and single person households, male or female, using dummy variables. Marital status identifies married couples and single men and women (i.e., never married, divorced or widowed). Absent a direct measure, cohabitation is constructed using POSSLQ (Partners of the Opposite Sex Sharing Living Quarters), which captures almost all self-identified cohabitators (Casper and Cohen 2000). A household is defined as a POSSLQ if it contains (a) a reference person, (b) one other adult (age 16 +) of the opposite sex who is not related to the reference person, and (c) no other adults (age 16 +), except the children or other relatives of the reference person. Excluding cases that cannot be defined as a couple or non-couple household reduces the sample to 13,266 cases.

Control variables

For *household resources*, we control for total consumer unit income (13 categories range from "under \$3,000" to "\$75,000 or more"). We replace missing data with mean values and include a dummy variable indicating this substitution. Excluding cases with missing income

values does not affect the results. As a measure of household resources and the demand for male tasks, especially home maintenance, a dummy variable indicates whether a household owns its home as opposed to renting or having other arrangements. For *time availability*, a dummy variable indicates that a couple has a single earner. As time-consuming jobs increase the need for outsourcing, we control for the total hours household members spend in the labor market in couple and non-couple households. For *demand capability*, two dummy variables indicate the presence of children younger than 6, and between ages 6 and 17. The number of rooms in the home is also included.

For couples, the education of the female partner has 8 categories from “never attended school” to “professional/doctorate degree.” For 292 cohabiting couples that did not report her education, the male’s education is used. For singles, we use the education of the reference person. Age of the reference person indicates the demand for domestic services due to physical limitations. Our analyses show a linear effect of age, because nonlinear effects were not statistically significant with age-squared nor with a dummy variable for “65 and older.” A dummy variable identifies whether the reference person is nonwhite. The summary statistics for these variables appear in Table 1.

Method

We estimate Tobit models (Tobin 1958) to examine the impact of living arrangements on expenditures for female and male tasks. Tobit models are appropriate when data have a lower-boundary of zero that can lead to biased and inconsistent OLS estimates. A maximum-likelihood procedure corrects for this limited dependent variable (Tobin 1958). Tobit models account for the distinction between the probability of any spending and the amount spent for those who do spend.

Results

Married vs. Cohabiting Couples

Specialization arguments and gender theories inspire alternative hypotheses tested with scale-adjusted, outsourcing expenditures of married and cohabiting couples. In Table 2, expenditures for couple households are regressed on cohabitation status as well as on indicators for household resources, time availability, demand capability, and controls. The columns show the Tobit results for total expenditures separately on female tasks (laundry, housekeeping, dining out) and male tasks (gardening, home maintenance). Net of other variables, cohabiting and married couples do not differ significantly on spending for *either* male or female tasks. Contrary to the specialization hypothesis predicting smaller expenditures for married than cohabiting couples, gender production predicted these similar expenditures because both partnerships pair persons of the opposite sex to stimulate similarly “gendered” household activities. These spending similarities are also consistent with gender socialization that leads men and women to act in gendered ways, regardless of living arrangements.

The control variables have largely predictable effects. The hours worked by household members increase expenditures on female tasks but decrease spending on male tasks. Single-earner couples spend more on male tasks but do not differ significantly from dual-earners on female tasks. Children decrease, rather than increase, spending on female and male tasks, perhaps because youngsters do some tasks and make restaurant visits less enjoyable.

Table 1: Means, Standard Deviations and Sample Sizes for Variables by Living Arrangement

Variable	Total sample	Married	Cohabiting	Single women	Single men
Sample size	13,266	7,172	548	3,428	2,118
Service expenditures female tasks ^a	1109.34 (1679.09)	1088.57 (1549.17)	998.29 (1100.00)	841.40 (1268.47)	1686.92 (2522.61)
Service expenditures male tasks ^b	218.77 (1260.21)	244.21 (1125.42)	95.87 (648.32)	267.26 (1705.15)	102.78 (728.81)
Income consumer unit	10.04 (3.15)	11.25 (2.44)	10.28 (2.75)	8.27 (3.27)	9.05 (3.30)
Missing income	18%	16%	20%	20%	22%
Owned home	60%	78%	39%	46%	35%
Single earner household	-	16%	14%	-	-
Total hours worked	43.40 (32.17)	58.00 (33.40)	36.36 (18.23)	22.49 (20.98)	32.18 (20.96)
Presence children < 6	12%	18%	17%	7%	1%
Presence children 6 – 17	33%	45%	23%	25%	8%
# Rooms in house	5.65 (2.17)	6.29 (2.13)	5.02 (1.74)	4.99 (1.94)	4.76 (2.05)
Education ^c	3.97 (1.66)	4.05 (1.66)	3.80 (1.52)	3.79 (1.67)	4.10 (1.62)
Missing education	3%	2%	55%	0%	0%
Age reference person	46.76 (17.84)	47.97 (15.37)	36.11 (13.58)	50.09 (21.47)	40.75 (18.39)
Not White	16%	12%	13%	22%	15%

Source: Consumer Expenditure Survey 1998

Note: Table entries are means or percentages (as noted) and, in parentheses, standard deviations.^aLaundry, housekeeping, dining out^bGardening, home maintenance^cEducation female partner for couple households, education reference person for single households

Table 2: Tobit Models of Domestic Service Expenditures: Cohabiting vs. Married Couples

	Female tasks ^a		Male tasks ^b	
	B	SE(B)	B	SE(B)
Married ^c	-	-	-	-
Cohabiting	-17.72	75.91	29.12	165.65
Income consumer unit	119.24***	7.41	145.14***	15.95
Missing income	61.11	41.90	171.70*	81.46
Owned home	-82.22*	40.70	1718.91***	108.29
Single earner household	64.72	42.07	137.34*	76.66
Total hours worked	4.43***	.59	-2.79**	1.06
Presence children < 6	-288.45***	43.79	-4.52	86.47
Presence children 6 – 17	-384.72***	31.90	-232.01***	58.33
# Rooms in house	44.58***	8.05	56.66***	13.40
Education female partner	104.92***	9.89	164.99***	17.79
Missing education female	326.97***	80.81	-167.97	169.40
Age reference person	2.00	1.40	20.90***	2.63
Not White	-222.35***	45.04	-3.37	85.19
Constant	-1112.73***	111.17	-6187.35***	266.63
Chi ²	1222.24***		1265.80***	
n	7,538		7,538	

Source: Consumer Expenditure Survey 1998

^aLaundry, housekeeping, dining out^bGardening, home maintenance^cReference group

*p < .05 **p < .01 ***p < .001 (one-tailed tests)

Couples vs. Non-couple Households

Table 3 compares service expenditures of couple households with those of single men and single women. Singles – men and women – spend more than couples on outsourcing female tasks. Single women, but not single men, spend more on male tasks. That single women outspend couples across the board is predicted by gender production: Without a male partner, single women have little incentive to act out gendered domesticity but ample reason to avoid the drudgery of various chores. Single men's spending is more consistent with gender socialization, as they spend as much as couples on own-gender, male tasks, but more on tasks that would fall to a female partner.

Table 3: Tobit Models of Domestic Service Expenditures: Couples vs. Single Men and Single Women

	Female tasks ^a		Male tasks ^b	
	B	SE(B)	B	SE(B)
Couple ^c	-	-	-	-
Single women	218.00***	40.26	788.02***	88.43
Single men	848.69***	47.14	-111.89	116.95
Income consumer unit	121.67***	6.05	147.33***	15.59
Missing income	-120.63**	38.03	-147.36	90.61
Owned home	-86.03*	36.93	2888.17***	114.72
Total hours worked	4.21***	.61	-.96	1.34
Presence children < 6	-349.16***	45.91	59.21	113.55
Presence children 6 – 17	-391.14***	32.34	-396.80***	72.31
# Rooms in house	27.06***	7.67	86.12***	16.22
Education	144.39***	9.37	213.12***	20.77
Missing education	280.24**	80.91	-75.28	205.24
Age reference person	-2.54*	1.09	32.67***	2.70
Not White	-261.77***	39.53	33.16	95.00
Constant	-919.76***	92.80	-10519.52***	353.99
Chi ²	2158.53***		2654.66***	
n	12,638		12,638	

Source: Consumer Expenditure Survey 1998

^aLaundry, housekeeping, dining out

^bGardening, home maintenance

^cReference group

*p < .05 **p < .01 ***p < .001 (one-tailed tests)

Single Men vs. Single Women

Table 4 shows the results for single men and single women. Men spend more than women on female tasks, but less on male tasks. Further analysis (not reported) reveal that single men *only* spend more on dining out than single women. Their expenditures on laundry and housekeeping are similar to single women's. Higher dining out expenses by single men may be due to dating norms (i.e. men are expected to pay the bill) rather than to gender socialization of household tasks. Therefore, these results support the gender production argument: the expenditures of single men and women on female tasks are similar. Our results for male tasks, however, support the gender socialization expectation that people spend less on own-gender tasks and more on other-gender chores. Single men spend less than single women on male tasks (that men presumably do themselves). The results speak

Table 4: Tobit Models of Domestic Service Expenditures: Single Men vs. Single Women

	Female tasks ^a		Male tasks ^b	
	B	SE(B)	B	SE(B)
Single women ^c	-	-	-	-
Single men	594.02***	60.80	-1198.81***	181.50
Income consumer unit	130.97***	10.82	162.67***	32.72
Missing income	-375.61***	73.88	-778.22***	217.57
Owned home	-93.03	68.20	4449.27***	240.12
Total hours worked	6.40***	1.70	13.29**	5.02
Presence children < 6	-231.22*	134.60	-311.31	531.87
Presence children 6 – 17	-337.56***	72.94	-841.28***	203.75
# Rooms in house	-5.02	15.31	119.53**	42.99
Education reference person	187.01***	18.56	221.44***	50.14
Age reference person	-4.36*	1.93	55.42***	6.37
Not White	-305.98***	70.34	58.00	212.18
Constant	-741.22***	158.27	-11922.67***	613.94
Chi ²	959.84***		1402.30***	
n	5,100		5,100	

Source: Consumer Expenditure Survey 1998

^aLaundry, housekeeping, dining out^bGardening, home maintenance^cReference group

*p < .05 **p < .01 ***p < .001 (one-tailed tests)

only to amounts spent, and we cannot evaluate the possibility that, say, men – being more familiar with male tasks and their requirements – obtain more services at lower cost than their female counterparts.

Conclusion and Discussion

Gender differences in the household division of labor are the linchpin of a system of inequality that disadvantages women not merely at home, but in all institutions (Budig 2004). Studies of housework help us to understand how this inequality is perpetuated, but they have been incomplete. They fail to consider the domestic services that women and men buy as substitutes for their own labor. When dual-earner couples have more money than time, this is a serious omission. Focusing on the need for services and the money to buy them, studies of outsourcing expenditures have largely neglected gender processes. Drawing on theories of gender differentiation that have informed studies of housework,

this article advances research by considering spending on both male and female chores. It extends the analysis beyond husband-wife couples to the growing number of households with cohabiting couples or single persons. The spending differences, as predicted by gender socialization and gender production, are summarized in Table 5 together with the results of the analyses.

Table 5: Hypotheses and Results on Gender Theories

	Female tasks			Male tasks		
	Hypotheses		Results	Hypotheses		Results
	Gender socialization	Gender production		Gender socialization	Gender production	
Cohabiting vs. married	0	0	0	0	0	0
Single men versus couples	+	+	+	0	+	0
Single women versus couples	0	+	+	+	+	+
Single men versus single women	+	0	0	-	0	-

For couples, the gender socialization/production theories are superior to the specialization argument. Our results show no statistically significant differences in spending between cohabiting and married couples. On four tests involving singles, gender socialization and gender production theories predicted spending differences. The results are consistent with gender socialization for the outsourcing of male tasks. Given gender socialization, individuals – acting on internalized ideologies of gender differentiation – will do own-gender tasks and avoid opposite-gender chores. Accordingly, we find that single men 1) spend less than single women on “men’s work,” and 2) spend the same as couples on male tasks. Regarding female tasks, however, the results support gender production. The results show that 1) single women spend the same on female tasks as single men, and 2) single women spend more on female tasks than do couples.

These results suggest a gendered logic whereby men and women respond to different influences on behavior. Men fall back on internalized gender ideologies, but women engage in gender production, fluidly fine-tuning their work and spending to those around them. That women are more sensitive to relational concerns (e.g., household composition) is not a new idea (Gilligan 1982). The distinction between male and female tasks is important: only “women’s work” offers evidence that women engage in gender production. However mundane, cleaning, cooking and laundry may be gender-affirming activities for women – the caring work of relationships and too meaningful to be casually outsourced (DeVault 1991). Or, due to less sense of personal entitlement (Major 1993), women may be hard put to justify spending to replace their own labor. Lastly, the sporadic nature of men’s tasks may argue for outsourcing men’s work, because their episodic chores present fewer learning opportunities than do women’s routine work.

Our theorizing about outsourcing extrapolated from research on the household division of labor. Lacking data on time spent on household chores, we cannot directly examine the time-use assumptions that motivate our hypotheses on expenditures. A couple where both partners

share housework equally might arrive at the same expenditures as a couple where one person handles all the housework. On the other hand, studies of housework lack data on outsourcing and proceed on the implausible assumption that household members perform all of the household chores. To gain leverage on both issues, we need studies with detailed data on the time allocated to household labor *and* the outsourcing expenditures on household tasks.

This article advances prior studies on outsourcing in three ways. First, it includes the expenditures of increasingly common living arrangements – cohabiting couples, single men and single women. Outsourcing is evaluated not merely as a panacea for time strapped, dual-career couples, but also as responses to the egalitarian lifestyles of cohabitators and the gender-specific labor shortages of singles. Second, rather than focusing on global spending measures or on the outsourcing of stereotypically female chores, the article compares expenditures – adjusted for household size, composition and scale economies – on both male and female household tasks. Third, we formulate and test alternative hypotheses based on three theories of gender differentiation – the economic specialization model, the gender socialization approach and the feminist sociology of gender production. The article finds no support for the hypothesis that marriage affects expenditures by reducing the risk of specialization. Despite consistent evidence that gender socialization dictates expenditures on male tasks, the findings for the gender production of “women’s work” are more complex.

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